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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 002383

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NSC FOR ADAM STERLING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PINS](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: HUNGARY PREPARES FOR THE NATO SUMMIT: TO RIGA ...
THROUGH BAGHLAN

REF: SECSTATE 186256

Classified By: POL/C ERIC V. GAUDIOSI; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: As the GoH prepares for the NATO Summit, we are using quiet diplomatic contacts and aggressive public outreach to help shape their preparations. GoH officials recognize that Afghanistan will be the central focus at Riga and appreciate that NATO's efforts there represent an important step in a transformation agenda they support. They continue to look to our support as they take on what they regard as the unprecedented challenge of leading a PRT in Baghlan Province, but with our encouragement - and strong (and rare) domestic bipartisan support - they are increasingly attuned to the need to focus on reconstruction and development programs to complement the PRT's military tasks. We have succeeded in securing the GoH's agreement to make a significant donation of small arms to the Afghan national security forces at Riga; although increases in defense spending remain a longer-term goal given their current economic straits, this step would be in their interest and within their ability. End Summary.

TAKING STOCK

¶2. (C) Ambassador Foley hosted key GoH officials and NATO Ambassadors at a November 17 dinner to discuss Hungary's Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan. In initial remarks, State Secretary Gemesi outlined the GoH's desire to implement projects in fields ranging from police reform to distance learning. Further discussion highlighted the GoH's acute need to develop its plans in further detail to move from the conceptual phase to actual implementation. Subsequently, officials from various GoH offices have contacted USAID and other Embassy offices for follow-up meetings and discussions.

¶3. (C) Drawing on his experience as The Netherlands' Special Envoy in Afghanistan, Dutch Ambassador Mollinger urged the Hungarian PRT to promote local ownership of its development initiatives through close coordination with Afghan officials. He also underscored the importance of an active public diplomacy strategy to sustain popular support for the mission, cautioning that the GoH must do so "before there are body bags."

TAKING THE HILL

¶3. (C) Ambassador Foley joined her Dutch and German colleagues to discuss NATO issues with the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee November 21. In her opening remarks, she underscored NATO's ongoing transformation as a "community of values in action" around the globe. She drew particular attention to the importance of NATO's mission to

the people of Afghanistan, welcoming the strong bipartisan support Hungary's PRT leadership and highlighting the salience of this effort as an indicator of Hungary's transition from "a believer in democracy to an actor for democracy." In her comments and in subsequent TV interview, she referred to "the responsibilities as well as the privileges of membership," emphasizing the USG's own enduring commitment to NATO and the importance of greater Hungarian investment in defense. She also called on the GoH to "think creatively and act generously" to support Afghan authorities by donating equipment to meet key shortfalls in the near-term.

¶4. (C) Ambassador Mollinger focused on the importance of "the 3 D's" - defense, development, and diplomacy" in ensuring the PRT's success. He praised the transition from Dutch to Hungarian leadership in Pol-e-Khomri, and pledged the GoNL's assistance in pursuing EU funds to support reconstruction efforts in Baghlan. German Ambassador Schiff reiterated his government's commitment to the mission in Afghanistan and outlined priorities including capacity-building, investment in "quick-impact" development projects, and security sector reform.

¶5. (C) Questions from the committee reflected their deep interest in NATO issues in general and the question of enlargement in particular. The Ambassador's reiteration of our policy re Croatia was especially welcome, and the broad bipartisan consensus on NATO issues - despite continuing domestic political acrimony - was evident throughout. Also of note were Ambassador Mollinger's admission of an "EU policy deficit" on Afghanistan and Ambassador Schiff's matter-of-fact comment that high expectations for Germany's EU presidency might prove unrealistic given "upcoming

BUDAPEST 00002383 002 OF 002

elections in France."

TAKING IT TO THE TOP

¶6. (C) Ambassador Foley reviewed reftel points with PM Gyurcsany in a subsequent phone call, emphasizing Afghanistan as the Summit's central issue. He noted the strong national consensus on NATO issues including the PRT, but immediately cautioned that Hungary would have to "regain its economic strength" before it could consider any increase in defense spending. Anticipating his comments regarding Hungary's budgetary straits, she pressed for a generous donation of small arms as a practical contribution to Alliance efforts to stand up Afghan security forces. About to leave for a trip to Macedonia, Albania, and Bosnia (where he indicated Hungary would make a further commitment of troops to international stabilization forces), Gyurcsany asked for "two days" to get back to us.

FROM EACH ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY

¶7. (C) Comment: Hungary will bring few big ideas to Riga but will bring something to the table in the form of a significant donation to Afghan security forces: we have received confirmation of their decision to donate 20,000 assault rifles, and also of their interest in AID training for their PRT, which we believe will help focus and strengthen their civil reconstruction planning efforts. Issues of bipartisan consensus are rare, and we have encouraged both the government and the opposition to support NATO transformation as they supported NATO membership. The PRT presents an enormous bureaucratic challenge to the GoH, and Hungarian officials must use the coming months to prepare their civil development initiatives for the spring. The Ambassador's dinner highlighted the need for a sustained effort, and also built important relationships with key Allies to support their efforts. In the longer-term, we hope the success of the PRT - as related to the Hungarian people through an active media strategy - will help build support for further investment in defense in keeping with Hungary's

commitment to the Alliance. End Comment.

Minimize Considered

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